USAID Evaluation News

A Newsletter on Recent Evaluation Findings and Methods

1995 • Vol. 7 • No. 2

Development Experience Review

Study recommends ways to preserve biodiversity

by Phillip Church, CDIE

Photo by Tropical Science Center, Costa Rica

USAID support is helping preserve the habitat of these howler monkeys in Costa Rica.

In this issue

A six-country study of USAID's biodiversity conservation efforts reveals that USAID has contributed to the global inventory of protected habitats and changed attitudes about the value of protecting biological diversity. It will take longer, however, to effect changes in behavior, and economic and financial incentives will be critical to sustainability.

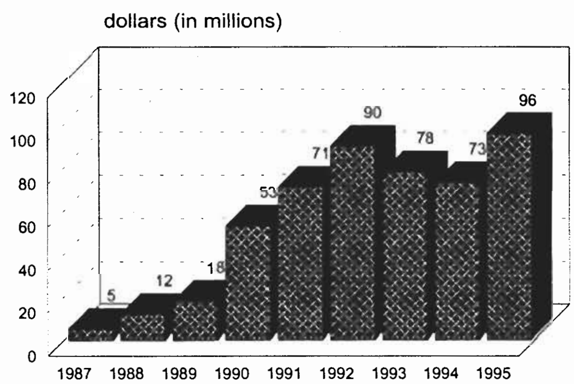
Support for conservation of biological diversity is a significant component of the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) new sustainable development strategy. Since 1987 when Congress mandated the Tropical Forest and Biodiversity Conservation Program, USAID funding for the protection of biological resources has increased rapidly, averaging about $75 million annually since 1990. Figure 1 shows the growth in USAID funding.

In 1993–94 USAID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) conducted field evaluations of the early progress and performance of six biological diversity conservation projects in Costa Rica, Jamaica, Madagascar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. The six studies examined USAID support for official protection and management of biologically rich areas.

This support has been part of a global trend. Data compiled in figure 2 show rapid expansion in the amount of the earth's surface under some form of official protection. These areas range from strictly enforced wildlife sanctuaries where no unofficial human entrance is allowed to areas where limited economic activity (crop cultivation, animal grazing, forest product harvesting, recreational tourism) is permitted. Two-thirds of these protected areas are in the developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

However, legally protected areas are no more than "paper parks" unless there is enough money and skilled staff to manage them. One of the challenges to biodiversity conservation is making the best use of limited public funds while fostering ways to engage resources—public and private, local and national—in conserving the world's biological heritage.

Figure 1. USAID Funding for Biodiversity Conservation, FY 1987-95



Emerging approaches

Four strategic approaches to protecting biologically rich areas have emerged from this study. Figure 3 depicts a decision framework based on these approaches. There is no hierarchical or sequential order implicit in the four strategies, and all should be considered in formulating a program.

1. Creating officially designated protected areas. This includes demarcating land and marine habitats for the conservation of biological resources, securing title and access to protected areas, and planning protected-area systems.

2. Improving management of protected area resources. Activities include developing management plans, improving operations where habitats serve as

USAID Evaluation News

Annette Binnendijk—Editor in Chief
Laurie Denton—Managing Editor
Ross Bankson—Senior Editor
Charles Wilkinson—Production Editor

USAID Evaluation News is produced by the Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE), with contract assistance from Conwal Incorporated for writing and editing and production support. The views and interpretations expressed herein are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the U.S. Agency for International Development. Comments, articles, and inquiries may be sent to Laurie Denton, managing editor, *USAID Evaluation News*, CDIE, U.S. Agency for International Development, Washington, DC 20523–1802, or by calling 703–875–4958. Fax 703–875–4866. Internet ldenton@usaid.gov. Articles should be six or fewer double-spaced typed pages.

parks, monitoring ecological conditions, assisting in natural regeneration of degraded habitats, and generating revenues to help finance protected-area management.

3. Integrating development and conservation activities in areas surrounding protected habitats. Creation of protected areas may limit traditional income-producing activities of nearby communities. Reducing encroachment of communities into newly demarcated protected areas involves activities such as increasing local awareness and understanding, organizing local communities to promote environmental awareness, and introducing alternative income-producing activities so residents won't encroach on protected habitats to hunt, log, or farm.

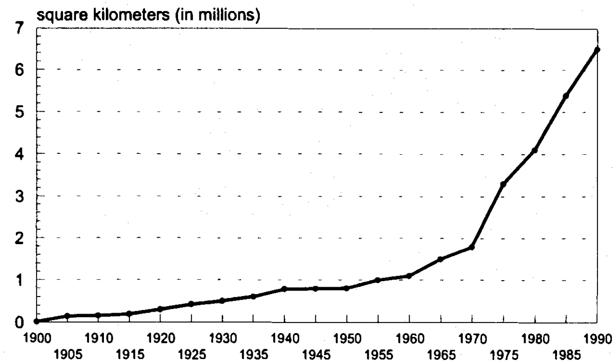
4. Reforming national policies that affect biodiversity conservation. This includes improving public and policymaker understanding of the value of critical habitats and their biological resources, orchestrating partnerships between government and nongovernment conservation groups, and introducing economic and financial incentives or legal reforms to discourage activities that promote habitat destruction, such as agriculture and export subsidies, and low logging concession fees.

Findings and lessons

USAID has contributed directly to the global inventory of protected habitats in countries where protected-area creation has been an objective. In Costa Rica, Jamaica, and Sri Lanka new parks and protected areas owe their existence to USAID support in planning and demarcation. Still, many officially protected areas are threatened by degradation or are too small to support viable populations of many plant and animal species they were created to protect. Recent USAID supported initiatives in Costa Rica and Madagascar have sought to overcome these problems by promoting more comprehensive land-use planning and management.

These USAID projects demonstrate that investments are needed not only to improve facilities and infrastructure for protected-area operations but also to increase human and institutional capacity to manage biological resources. In Costa Rica, Jamaica, and Sri Lanka, USAID projects have helped increase capacity to patrol against encroachment (with staff lodging, vehicles, and communications equipment) and to provide assistance to visitors (with roads, trails, and interpretation facilities). Experience with these activities suggests, however, that effective conservation requires recruiting and training staff to prepare management plans, inventory and monitor wildlife populations, and restore degraded habitats. To assess what is happening to biological resources in these countries, better information is needed.

Figure 2. Cumulative World Growth of Protected Areas

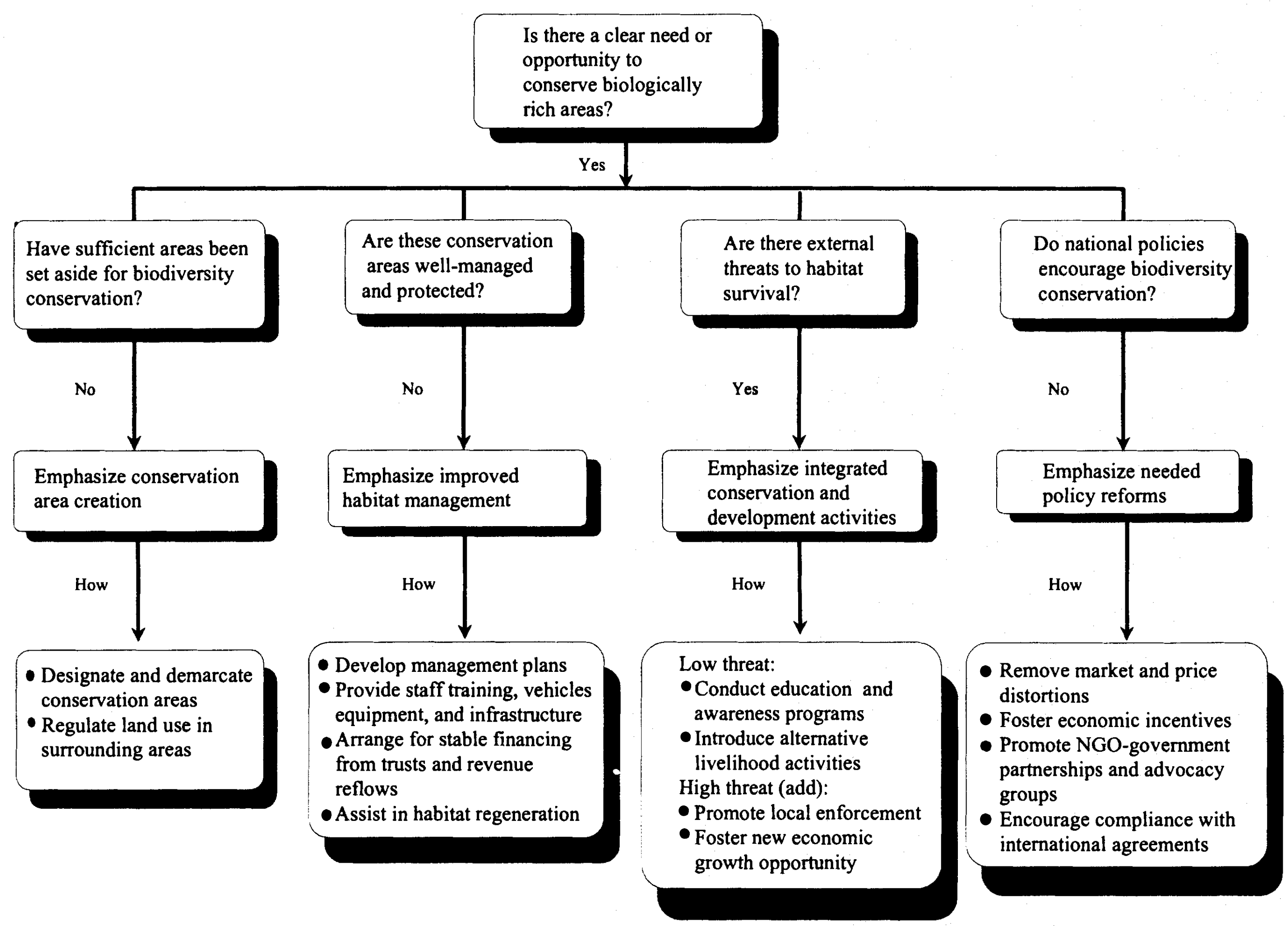


Source: World Conservation Monitoring Centre, 1994

Awareness of the value of biodiversity conservation can be raised quickly, but changes in practices require the commitment of resources over a much longer period. In Costa Rica, Jamaica, Madagascar, Nepal, and Thailand, environmental messages have increased conservation awareness and changed attitudes, even in rural areas with low literacy and income levels.

Converting awareness to better conservation practices has proven to be a long-term endeavor, however, requiring sustained efforts at, for example, introducing new livelihood activities to break the debt and poverty cycle that has forced many rural dwellers to encroach on protected areas to log, hunt, fish, or farm for survival. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) chosen to run integrated conservation and development programs often need time and resources initially to build skills in rural development, community organization, and agriculture.

USAID's early biodiversity conservation efforts demonstrate that economic and financial incentives will be critical to sustaining biological diversity. A spectrum of economic reforms and incentives is needed to sustain these programs. National economic policies may need to be changed. For instance, market and price policies can threaten protected areas by fostering extractive enterprises such as mining, timber harvesting, and commercial fishing. If those policies remain in place, project-



level activities may be thwarted or their effectiveness diminished. Promising efforts to improve financial viability include innovative mechanisms such as environmental trusts, which have been set up in Costa Rica, Jamaica, and Sri Lanka, and visitor fee and user tax systems, used in Costa Rica and Nepal. These generate revenue for protected area operations and management.

Recommendations

Several recommendations emerge from the study. Already USAID biodiversity programs are being designed to apply them.

- **Foster government partnerships with NGOs to help public agencies extend the reach of biodiversity conservation programs.** Because developing-country governments have limited funds for protecting biologically rich areas, USAID should support partnerships between government conservation agencies and national and international NGOs to mobilize additional talent and funding. USAID programs can foster community and group participation in conservation and in restoration of degraded forest habitats. Community members can also act as private, licensed operators of tourist lodges and provide transport and guide services.

- **Promote ways that protected areas can generate revenues to contribute to their operation and management.** USAID can support the design and implementation of measures to mobilize revenues from visitor fees and taxes and channel these funds back into protected-area operations. Lodging, food, and souvenir concessions can generate revenues and cover a share of park operating costs. Such income-generating enterprises increase the commitment of public and private stakeholders to protect biologically rich areas.
- **Identify and promote opportunities for private investments consistent with sustainable use of biological resources.** Wildlife and its habitats offer investment opportunities for domestic and international firms in such ventures as nature tourism and biological prospecting for new pharmaceutical drugs. Under proper regulation, surrounding areas can become sites for such undertakings as farm forestry, plant nurseries, game ranches, or sport fishing. Ventures such as these can enhance public awareness of the value of biological resources, generate taxes for protected-area operations, and create jobs for local communities.
- **Support removal of market distortions and reform of economic policies that cause biodiversity loss.** USAID can enhance the effectiveness of its biodiversity conservation programs by identifying for reform those pricing and market policies that promote unsustainable uses of biologically rich habitats.
- **Coordinate USAID program resources to ensure the greatest effectiveness of Agency biodiversity conservation efforts.** For example, USAID microenterprise programs can finance nature tourism ventures; agriculture and agribusiness programs can generate new farm and off-farm alternatives to habitat encroachment; policy reforms can remove market distortions that undervalue biological resources and lead to their destruction; and democracy and governance programs can increase capacity of NGOs and public agencies to address conservation needs. In return, USAID support for conservation of biological resources can broaden the base of economic activity and introduce additional scope for popular participation in sustainable development. ▲

Photo by World Wildlife Fund, Thailand

Illegal logging continues to threaten protected habitats, as here in Thailand.

The full report, "Stemming the Loss of Biological Diversity: An Assessment of USAID Support for Protected-Area Management" (PN-ABS-518), is forthcoming from CDIE and can be ordered from the DISC (see order information box, page 9).

What's new in evaluation of the environment?

For more evaluations on environmental programs, see these recent CDIE reports, available from the Development Information Services Clearinghouse (see box on page 9).

Protecting Biological Diversity in Costa Rica, USAID Evaluation Highlights No. 40, March 1995 (PN-ABS-502)

Forestry and the Environment: The Philippines Case Study, USAID Evaluation Highlights No. 32, March 1995 (PN-ABS-506)

Forestry and the Environment: Mali Case Study, USAID Evaluation Highlights No. 42, March 1995 (PN-ABS-507)

Protecting Biological Diversity in Madagascar, USAID Evaluation Highlights No. 43, March 1995 (PN-ABS-508)

Forestry and the Environment: Nepal Case Study, USAID Evaluation Highlights No. 44, March 1995 (PN-ABS-509)

Agriculture and the Environment: The Philippines Case Study, USAID Evaluation Highlights No. 45, March 1995 (PN-ABS-510)

Agriculture and the Environment: Mali Case Study, No. 46. April 1995. (PN-ABS-512)

Stemming the Loss of Biological Diversity, An Assessment of USAID Support for Protected-Area Management, POA Report, No. 11, August 1995 (PN-ABS-518)

Protecting Biological Diversity in Jamaica, Highlights No. 51, June 1995 (PN-ABS-527)

Evaluation Methods

Looking at results in a reengineered USAID

by Gerald Britan, CDIE

USAID is at the forefront of the federal government's efforts to manage for results. The Administrator not only nominated USAID as a performance measurement pilot under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, but also named the Agency a reinvention laboratory under Vice President Gore's National Performance Review.

Last year, USAID began further reengineering how it does business, centering on partnership and participation, teamwork and empowerment, customers, and results. The Operations Business Area Analysis team, which was given the task of developing a new Agency operations system, issued its report, *Making a Difference for Development,* in February. The chapter on judging results describes how the Agency will use results (or performance) information to assure accountability, improve program management and improve understanding of development.

Why judge results?

There are three fundamental reasons to judge results. First, it assures accountability. Judging results helps verify that resources are well spent and that programs are achieving expected improvements for customers. Second, it improves program management. Managers can make better decisions if they monitor progress (problems and successes) and identify information gaps. And third, it improves understanding of development. Assessing results and identifying lessons learned will advance broader development theory and practice.

As a dynamic, learning organization, USAID will measure and judge results at every level—for activities, for strategic objectives, and for the Agency as a whole. Concern for results must permeate all business practices, in personnel, procurement, resource allocation, and financial management, as well as in planning and implementing development programs.

How do we judge results?

The three approaches, performance monitoring, evaluation, and research, are interrelated and inform each other, but they embody different ways of collecting, analyzing, and using performance data.

Performance monitoring, typically of a few fairly simple, practical performance indicators, is most relevant to accountability and improving operational management. It tracks progress and analyzes differences between actual and planned results. Performance monitoring can identify issues that need to be addressed and provide an empirical basis for managers and teams to determine where their attention is most needed.

Research is less concerned with measuring results and more concerned with analyzing and understanding why particular results occur. It is used to test hypotheses, validate theory, and, in applied research, to identify better approaches. Research typically embodies more formal designs for collecting and analyzing data than performance monitoring, which allows for clearer conclusions about cause and effect.

Evaluation straddles the gap between performance monitoring and research. Like performance monitoring, it is concerned with the results of particular interventions and often makes use of performance monitoring data. But evaluation usually assesses both the intended and unintended consequences of interventions and their sustainability. Evaluation provides a more detailed examination of *what* the results embody, *how* they are being achieved, and, to the extent possible, *why*. Evaluation often provides recommendations for changes in approaches, tactics, and tools to resolve problems and improve performance.

Like research, evaluation typically applies formal data collection and analysis to test hypotheses and assess whether results can, in fact, be attributed to USAID programs. Indeed, evaluation often examines, after an intervention, the same links between cause and effects that research analyzes more broadly before the intervention.

How do we monitor performance?

Strategic planning involves choosing objectives, indicators, and targets, and sets the stage for performance monitoring.

Identifying objectives and intermediate results

Clearly identified strategic objectives and intermediate results are the focal point of an operating unit's strategic plan. The strategic planning process encompasses extensive customer and partner input, a careful assessment of the development setting, a thorough problem analysis, and a consideration of USAID's priorities and capabilities. It yields a progressively refined statement of the results USAID expects to achieve, the way in which those results will be measured, the amount of change to be attained, and how these changes relate to broader Agency goals.

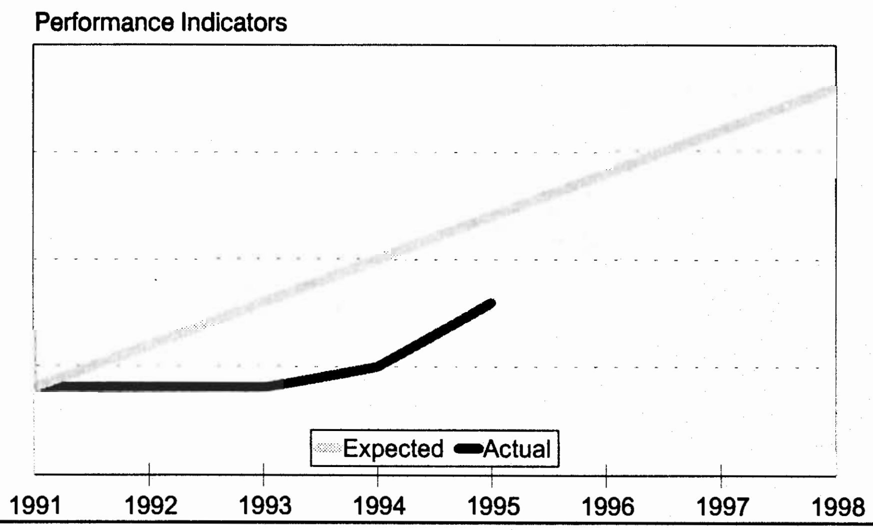
Selecting useful and comparable performance indicators

Performance indicators are specific performance measures chosen because they provide valid, useful, practical, and (to the extent feasible) comparable measures of progress in achieving expected results. They provide a basis for review and decision-making. In a very important sense, the performance indicators define what will change, and what the intended result encompasses.

As management tools, performance indicators must first and foremost provide valid, useful, and practical information to the managers and teams responsible for achieving results. They must appropriately measure what managers have to achieve. They must provide useful information for decision-making. And they must be collectable at a reasonable cost. Different kinds of indicators are needed for different levels and types of results across the Agency.

Judging Results

Are performance targets being met?



Roles and responsibilities

Agencywide functions

USAID reports on Agency performance for the Administrator, the Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, and the public. Program and Policy Coordination (PPC) is responsible for summing up performance measures, evaluations, and case studies; for pulling together data on national and international trends; and for analyzing this information to demonstrate USAID's achievements.

The central bureaus—PPC, Management, Global, and the Bureau of Humanitarian Response—have other broad performance measurement functions. PPC, for example, has the lead in Agencywide strategic planning, assuring that operating unit objectives and results reflect Agency policies and goals. It is also responsible for establishing Agency standards and procedures for performance monitoring and evaluation, and for helping operating units understand and implement these standards and procedures.

The Global Bureau advises PPC on the technical adequacy and appropriateness of particular objectives and indicators. It also assists Missions in identifying objectives, selecting indicators and targets, and measuring performance. The Bureau of Humanitarian Responsibility plays a similar role with private voluntary organizations, Food for Peace, and other humanitarian initiatives.

With assistance from PPC, Management is responsible for translating performance measurement policies and procedures into a computerized Agencywide results information system.

Regional bureau functions

Bureaus are responsible for reviewing and approving operating unit strategic plans. Strategic plans must reflect country opportunities and constraints; incorporate customer and partner participation; identify strategic objectives; and provide resource estimates.

Bureaus also review and approve operating units' annual *Results Report and Resource Requests* (R4). While there is no simple formula relating funding to results, Bureau decisions should reflect performance information and judgments about where resources are likely to have the greatest effect. Bureaus assemble these decisions into a bureau budget submission.

Operating unit functions

Operating units prepare strategic plans and each year they assemble an R4 covering all their strategic objectives.

Operating units might also implement strategic evaluations, monitor selected countrywide conditions, survey customer needs and satisfaction, or track assumptions.

In tracking Agencywide performance, for example, the primary concern is with changes in countrywide, regional, or worldwide conditions central to USAID's sustainable development mission and its objectives in economic growth, population and health, environment, democracy, and humanitarian assistance. These objectives are generally beyond the scope of individual USAID operating units, although operating unit strategic objectives should be consistent with and contribute to them. Relatively few Agencywide indicators should be sufficient to track performance against Agency objectives. Most of these could reflect data from secondary sources.

At the operational level, where the primary consideration is management relevance, performance indicators should represent as precisely as possible those changes the operating unit is seeking. To the extent that USAID pursues similar objectives across country settings, however, comparable or identical indicators may be feasible and desirable.

One way to maximize the selection of comparable performance indicators would be through menu-driven indicator selection guidance, available as part of a computerized results information system. Such a system would inform managers how other operating units are measuring performance against similar objectives, what the most desirable indicators might be technically, or (in a few cases) what specific indicators the Agency might require for particular programs. Such a menu-driven system would in most cases permit operating units to choose unique indicators if none of the suggested alternatives was relevant or practical.

Setting performance targets

Once performance indicators are selected, operating units still need to set performance targets—the amount of change to be achieved in a given time frame. Experience, judgment, and local knowledge will, of course, always be important in setting targets, but a number of tools and techniques can be made available to help. These include

- **Better baselining.** It is difficult to establish a reasonable performance target without some basis for before-and-after comparisons, through either directly measured baselines or well-established trendlines.
- **More extensive customer surveying.** Performance targets, like indicators and objectives, should reflect extensive customer input that clarifies what intended beneficiaries want, value, and need and what development partners can reasonably deliver.
- **More easily accessible research and evaluation findings.** This requires both better technical analysis and more direct access to the Agency's development experience through the corporate information system to provide a broader knowledge base for setting targets.
- **Better internal benchmarking.** This involves analyzing and providing access to comparable data on targets established for similar objectives throughout the Agency, perhaps incorporated as part of the menu-driven, indicator selection system.
- **Better external (strategic) benchmarking.** This involves analyzing and providing access to comparable data on targets and results for similar objectives by other donors, agencies, or host governments, also accessible through the computer system.

Becoming a learning organization

USAID is committed to becoming a learning organization that manages for results. Nearly every part of the Agency has a role to play (see box on page 8).

To achieve sustainable development, however, USAID must reach high and take risks. It must leverage resources and mobilize partnerships to achieve strategic objectives that are well beyond our direct control.

In reaching high to achieve a significant result, we will also occasionally fail, and must learn from this experience. Individual managers, then, should not be penalized simply for failing to achieve some specific result, but should be evaluated on how well they manage for results in all their programs: whether they have clear objectives and targets, collect adequate information to judge progress, adjust strategies and activities accordingly, and over time make a significant difference.

Conclusion

USAID's ability to judge results and to use these judgments in adjusting strategies and activities is the linchpin of results-oriented development assistance. But effective judging depends on reengineering and other reforms. Little will be possible without a broader transformation in which the achievement of development results becomes the Agency's bottom line.

Delegating responsibility and authority to the development frontlines is essential, but only one side of a two-way street. The other side is accountability for results and, even more important, learning from experience. Managing for results, after all, reflects our commitment to making a difference for our customers and to making necessary changes to better serve those customers in the future. Judging results is the vehicle through which this accountability and learning occurs. ▲

Order information

Reports published by USAID referred to in this issue may be ordered from:
USAID Development Information
Services Clearinghouse (DISC)
1500 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 1010,
Arlington, VA 22209–2404
Tel: (703) 351–4006; fax: (703) 351–4039;
Internet: docorder@disc.mhs.compuserve.com

Presenting an Effective Briefing

by Michael Hendricks, evaluation consultant

Written reports are one way to communicate evaluation reports to leadership, but personal briefings are often better. The risks of briefings are more than offset by their benefits: they are highly visible, they fit managers' normal operating styles, they allow intensive interaction, and they encourage action.

Try these 10 steps to an effective briefing:

Step 1: Remember the unique purposes of a briefing

Unlike a written report, which aims primarily at conveying information, briefings aim primarily at creating a forum for discussion. Each aspect of a briefing should, therefore, encourage discussion. To do that, briefings need to convey results and answer questions. Finally, briefings can generate momentum for action, especially by their recommendations.

Step 2: Understand the audience for the briefing

First, decide who should attend the briefing. Ideally it should be a small, select audience. There is often one primary audience member, along with others close in rank. However, lower-level staff sometimes also attend because they are involved in the issues.

Find out about your audience, their backgrounds, including which countries they are familiar with, likely questions they might ask, and pet peeves. You can often learn this information by talking with people who are close to the primary audience or by reviewing speeches, decisions, and memoranda of the primary audience members.

Step 3: Select the information to present during the briefing

A briefing is short, so include only those evaluation results that matter to the audience. But how to determine what matters most?

- Review the executive summary of the written report, adding details only when absolutely necessary.
- Determine whether this information is needed to understand USAID activities or the evaluation, has consequences for operations or policy, has cost implications, is unexpected, and can be used by the audience.
- Ask others who regularly interact with the audience members or who have briefed them recently.
- Review audience members' speeches and memoranda on the topic.

Step 4: Choose the presenters

A successful briefing depends largely on the briefer, and one individual is usually best. But the briefer needs help. An assistant can handle specialized questions, and a higher ranking official can serve as a valuable liaison. Because the briefer is almost always lower ranking than the audience, the liaison can help mediate any controversies .

Step 5: Prepare appropriate visual aids

All briefings should use appropriate visual aids. Transparencies, slides, and computer presentations are effective but can malfunction.

The best visual aid is often a set of 8 to 10 high-quality briefing charts that are (a) large enough to read from 40 feet, (b) concise, with 7 to 10 lines on any single chart, (c) informative in and of themselves, so that each line of each chart communicates information, (d) easy to handle (foamboard is lightweight yet sturdy), and (e) helpful to the briefer.

One useful trick is to write on each chart, in light pencil, crib notes that the briefer can see but the audience cannot.

Step 6: Prepare a handout for each audience member

Visual aids are necessary but not sufficient. Give each audience member a letter-size handout to take notes and take away to share with others. Often this handout duplicates the large briefing charts, but it can also include more detailed information.

Place a handout at each seat before the audience arrives. Early arrivals will leaf through it, but this will simply satisfy their curiosity and let them focus once the briefing begins. Distributing handouts during the briefing or at its beginning seriously disrupts the flow of the briefing.

Step 7: Establish a written agenda for the briefing

A briefing is an ambitious undertaking. The goal is to create a forum for discussion, convey findings and recommendations, and generate momentum for action. To achieve all three tasks, carefully structure the briefing by developing and distributing a written agenda.

- The liaison introduces the purposes of the briefing, the issues to be discussed, and the briefer.
- The briefer presents the results of the evaluation, taking no more than one third of the total time available. For example, in a 1-hour briefing, the presentation should not exceed 20 minutes.
- An official of the activity evaluated responds for 5 minutes. This response provides the audience with fuller information, and it enhances the briefing's credibility (see step 10).
- The remaining time is reserved for a general discussion.

Step 8: Practice, practice, practice

The best way to ensure an effective briefing is to practice, practice, practice. Ideally you should practice under real circumstances—in the same (or a similar) room, using the actual briefing charts, with an audience arranged as the real one will be, with handouts for each person, at the same time of day, and using a stopwatch to time the presentation.

The more practice, the better. Start with informal briefings to small, supportive audiences. Next practice with larger, more neutral audiences. Eventually practice before audiences who are primed to point out any weaknesses in your presentation. If possible, videotape your practice briefings.

"The goal [of a briefing] is to create a forum for discussion, convey findings and recommendations, and generate momentum for action."

Step 9: Finish the miscellaneous arrangements

As the briefing date approaches, finish three miscellaneous arrangements:

- One week before the briefing, distribute advance materials to participants. These often include the topic, date, time, and location of the briefing; a list of participants (presenters and audience members); a summary of the evaluation results; and the written agenda. A copy of the evaluation report may be included, but not the briefing handouts.
- Several days before the briefing, choose a seating arrangement to maximize both the presentation and the discussion afterwards. Place the briefer close to the primary audience, and place other key

audience members close enough to interact with each other. If necessary, reserve seats for certain audience members.

- Early on the day of the briefing, arrange the room lighting to highlight the briefing charts. Then be sure to arrive at the briefing room early enough to check all the arrangements. The final minutes before a briefing is *not* the time to be hurriedly moving tables.

Step 10: Present the briefing

It is no accident that 9 of the 10 steps to an effective briefing come before the actual presentation. Most of the groundwork for a successful briefing occurs weeks and days in advance. Once the participants arrive, very little can be changed. However, the briefer must still:

A. Capture the attention of the audience immediately. Start with a short videotape, film, or slides. Be creative with ways to capture attention.

You might consider lining the walls with enlarged photographs of sites visited, or playing a tape recording of a market sale. For a briefing on family planning, you could display the different contraceptive devices being used in various countries. A presentation on health might begin with a display of different oral rehydration solutions being sold.

B. Provide information that is credible. Show the audience that you used solid methods to obtain, analyze, and interpret the findings. Address all the issues and respond fully to any questions. However, under no circumstances should you try to bluff your way out of a difficult question. Instead, simply promise to provide the information as soon as possible.

C. Make the presentation understandable. Simplify the complexity of the issues, present clear findings for each issue (often by using graphics), eliminate any jargon not obviously understood by all audience members, and tie each recommendation to the findings.

D. Interact with the audience as much as possible. To stimulate a healthy discussion and generate momentum for action, interact with the audience freely and frankly. Announce that questions are welcome at any time, look at the entire audience, and avoid microphones, full scripts, lecterns, or pointers.

E. Bring the findings to life. Analytical findings can easily become just that—analytical—and the audience can easily lose the "humanity" of the results. Use quotes, examples of particular situations, and anecdotes about personal experiences.

F. Present a totally professional image. An effective speaking voice, appropriate eye contact, proper dress, a pleasant attitude, and the confidence and poise to handle distractions will all affect how audience members view you and, by extension, the briefing.

> *‘Most of the groundwork for a successful briefing occurs weeks and days in advance. Once the participants arrive, very little can be changed.’*

G. Present a balanced picture of the issues. If audience members suspect that the briefing is skewing the results, they will completely discount your findings and recommendations. Having a response from an official of the activity evaluated (see step 7) shows balance. So does admitting any limitations of the findings and presenting any findings that qualify the results.

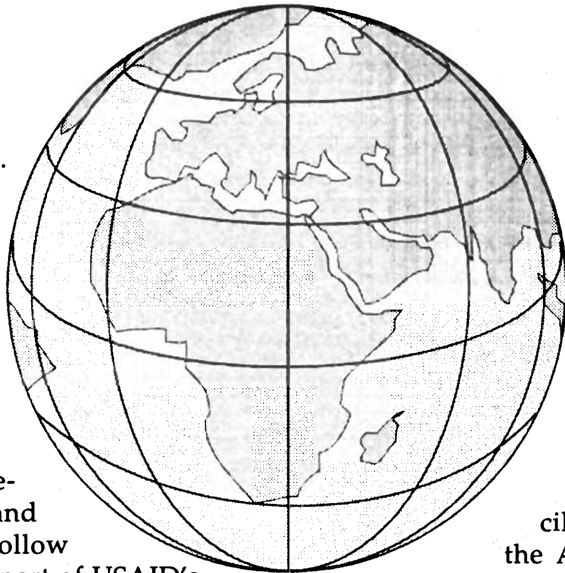
H. Help generate the momentum for action. Every USAID evaluation aims to generate momentum for next steps, and as the presenter, you can help. Keep the discussion focused on practical ways to address the issues, sum up points on which the audience seems to agree, and help assign to individuals the responsibility for any next steps.

I. After the briefing, you might send all of the participants the unofficial minutes of the discussion, including agreements for action. Later on, you might send them follow-up reports to keep the evaluation visible until all the agreed-upon actions are completed. ▲

News

USAID holds workshop on environmental indicators

by Steven Gale, CDIE



In late March, The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) held an intensive 2-day workshop in Washington D.C. to explore performance measurement of environmental programs. This was the first of four scheduled performance measurement workshops with others on democracy, economic growth, and humanitarian assistance to follow shortly. These workshops are part of USAID's reengineering efforts to improve its managing for results (MFR).

Purpose

The goals of the workshop were to

- Take stock of how the Agency measures its environmental programs
- Identify "candidate" indicators to serve as a minimum core dataset
- Exchange information on how USAID and its partners measure environmental impacts

Participants

Attended by more than 50 environmental specialists, the workshop was organized by staff from the Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) and the office of sector advisors of the Policy and Program Coordination Bureau and the Center for the Environment of the Global Bureau. They were joined by representatives from USAID field Missions and regional bureaus, USAID contractors, other U.S. Government officials, and interested partners who are working on environmental programs and indicators.

Workshop format

The workshop consisted of facilitated *breakout sessions* keyed to the Agency's environmental sectors (such as biodiversity conservation) and *plenary sessions* focused on broader measurement and data collection issues (such as performance indicator criteria).

Presenters at the plenary sessions included staff from USAID Missions in Niger and Madagascar, USAID's Africa Bureau, University of Maryland's Zoology Department, the World Resources Institute, as well as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Resource package and workshop products

Participants received a resource package, which is now available online through CDIE's Development Information Services Clearinghouse (DISC). The package contains background material on the Agency's environmental policy, lessons learned from the field, and worldwide perspectives on environmental measurement. It includes source documents by the World Bank, the World Resources Institute, and the U.N. Commission on Sustainable Development.

Those who were unable to attend the workshop can contact the DISC for copies of the Environmental Workshop Resource Package (PN-ABU-531). A Workshop Highlights Synopsis has been distributed to environmental officers in all USAID Missions. The Workshop Proceedings will be published shortly as a CDIE Working Paper in the USAID Managing for Results series.

Highlights

Inventory of environmental indicators established. An analysis of indicators in the Agencywide PRISM database revealed that USAID Missions use more than 400 indicators. These range from biophysical measures and adoption rates for various practices to measures of influence over national environmental policy.

Pros and cons of indicators debated. Participants debated the pros and cons of available indicators in general terms (such as costs, quality, and use). They also took an in-depth look at indicators for each environmental sector. As the breakout groups attempted to identify a candidate set of indicators for each sector, it became clear that different sectors relied on different types of indicators.

For example, the natural resources management breakout group placed much greater confidence in measuring adoption rates of agricultural and other environmental practices, while the energy breakout group stressed biophysical measures—monitoring emissions and concentrations of industrial pollutants.

Candidate indicators proposed for Agencywide use. Participants concurred that political and managerial realities necessitate that USAID move away from reliance on anecdotal and case-study information in reporting to Congress and toward a more systematic approach. The group proposed core environmental indicators (see box on page 15) as candidates for the Agency to gauge its overall performance.

However, USAID needs to address a number of technical and policy issues before the indicators can be put to use. For example, wider input, especially from the field, is necessary for the candidate indicators to take root. The Agency needs to explore issues of data costs, quality, and availability and clarify how the performance information will be used.

Performance measurement systems needed. Participants concurred that USAID requires a performance measurement system for two closely related purposes: informing Congress and the public, and managing programs internally at all levels. However, just how the system will work generated much debate. How will indicators take into account different strategic approaches, even within the same sector?

For example, how can we compare reducing greenhouse gas emissions with measuring the adoption rate by key industries of pollution prevention technologies? Participants also noted that sectors such as health, not surprisingly, are ahead of the environment sector in terms of having reached consensus on a conceptual framework and on working definitions for most indicators, and having generated readily available baseline data. But most participants agreed that the environmental program is making excellent progress toward measuring its performance.

> *'USAID requires a performance measurement system for two closely related purposes: informing Congress and the public, and managing programs internally at all levels.'*

Outstanding issues

While discussions about the nuts and bolts of indicators was a major focus of the workshop, there was also considerable discussion, especially among field practitioners, about the following broader issues:

1. Will "roll up" mean "roll down"? Participants generally agreed that environmental data can be aggregated, or "rolled up," to achieve a standard "metric" for reporting purposes. These indicators run the risk of oversimplifying and offering a reductionistic view of environmental issues that are highly complex, multidisciplinary, and often difficult to quantify.

By accepting performance indicators that roll up data, participants were concerned about the implications of their "roll down." Some expressed fears that these oversimplified indicators could be used as a top-down management tool to drive USAID policies and project designs and to set Agencywide targets, thereby straitjacketing program flexibility in the field.

2. Who will bear the costs? Participants concurred that the Agency needs to explore options for reducing the potentially high cost of gathering and managing environmental data (such as pooling resources with other international development agencies and using secondary sources). Participants also urged that the cost of data collection should not exceed its benefit and value. Moreover, field Mission representatives were concerned that a disproportionate share of the financial burden for gathering environmental information would fall on budget-strapped field Missions. While the high cost of generating performance information can be shared with other organizations, participants noted that USAID would still need to make a long-term and stable commitment (as it has made to health) if the Agency is serious about monitoring environmental performance.

3. How will performance influence budgets? A number of factors influence the budget allocation process, including political and historical influences as well as overall funding ceilings. It is not entirely clear how the performance and results USAID operating units achieve affect the budgeting process nor how things will change under MFR. If performance and results management do not clearly influence the budget allocation and programming process, there was widespread concern that MFR will not be taken seriously. This relates to the "roll-up/roll-down" concerns.

4. How will performance affect personnel appraisals? What is the relationship of the Agency's personnel appraisal system to how well one manages for results? Do they connect? Because the MFR approach breaks with the past way of doing business at USAID, one participant said, this raises the question of how the current personnel systems (or even the newly proposed unified personnel system) will accommodate MFR. If the Agency's appraisal system, which provides staff with incentives and rewards, is not sensitive to what is being asked of staff under MFR, then MFR will not get off to a solid start.

5. What will be PRISM's role? A number of participants raised issues about the future of the Agency's Program Performance Information for Strategic Management (PRISM) database, managed by CDIE. For example, what role will PRISM play in a newly reengineered USAID? Will it be the foundation for managing for results? Or will PRISM be gutted and revamped? If so, what would be the design and architecture of the successor databases and who would operate them? The Global Environmental Center maintains the Environmental and Natural Resources Information Center (ENRIC) database and questions. Participants raised questions

Candidate Environmental Indicators

Biodiversity Conservation and Forestry

- Habitat area conserved
- Habitat types prioritized
- Critical species protected
- Area restored (i.e., reforestation)
- Local resource management, stewardship, adoption of "sustainable" practices, economic benefits.

Urban and Industrial Environmental Problems

- Percentage of urban households with access to piped water
- Percentage of urban households with access to sanitation services
- Population benefitting from reduced exposure to SOx, NOx, etc.

Energy

- Energy intensity (commercial energy consumption per unit GDP)

Global Climate Change

- Carbon dioxide emissions per unit GDP
  —Energy and industrial emissions
  —Emission changes due to land-use changes

Water Management

- Percentage reduction in harmful compounds (chrome, NO_3)
- Percentage of families with access to adequate water supply

Sustainable Agriculture

- Area under improved management
- Number of farmers adopting improved agricultural practices
- Increased incomes from sustainably managed lands
- Improved yields from sustainably managed lands

Coastal and Marine Resources Management

- Percentage of communities implementing integrated coastal zone management plans
- Coliform bacteria counts in specified areas
- Area of restored coastal habitat (km)
- Area of protected coastal habitat (indicator species)
- Conversion rate of mangroves to other uses

about its role in support of MFR and how both PRISM and ENRIC databases might be better utilized.

6. What's the whole environmental picture? Each of the Agency's databases captures a different piece of the environmental pie but no one source can be relied on to tell the entire story. For example, PRISM captures data based on Mission documentation at the strategic objective level, while ENRIC focuses primarily on project-level budget data. There is no easy access at present to environmental data from Eastern European countries and the newly independent states, and this represents a major chunk of the environmental budget. Lastly, a number of centrally managed environmental projects, especially in energy, are not captured adequately in any existing Agency databases.

Next steps

Post-workshop activities include developing and refining the candidate indicators based on input from field Missions, technical staff at Washington headquarters, and environmental partners.

The outstanding issues raised at the workshop are being discussed with colleagues in USAID's Bureau for Management and other key bureaus and agency task forces engaged in USAID's reengineering efforts. Based on workshop input, CDIE is collaborating with the Global Center for the Environment and the Office of the Chief Environmental Officer to develop an overall results framework that can be used to capture USAID's environmental accomplishments systematically. ▲

Cyberspace surfers: Evaluation publications available online

All evaluation publications are available through the DISC in print or on microfiche. But did you know that you can also find the full text of more than 100 evaluation publications on the USAID Gopher? The Internet address is: **gopher.info.usaid.gov**

From the Main USAID Gopher menu, select: **Documents and Publications**
From the next menu, select: **USAID Publications and Reports**
Then select the sector of interest from the following menus:
Encouraging Broad-based Economic Growth
Protecting the Environment
Stabilizing Population Growth/Protecting Human Health
Building Democracy
Humanitarian Assistance and Transition Support
Agency Operations and Management
Other USAID Documents and Publications
Then select: **Evaluation Publications**

To find Evaluation Highlights and the Evaluation Newsletter, start at the Main USAID Gopher Menu and select: **Documents and Publications**
From the next menu, select: **USAID Newsletters**
From the next menu select either: **Evaluation Newsletter** or **USAID Evaluation Highlights**

For those with access to the Agency's Banyan local area network, Evaluation Highlights, compendiums, and the Evaluation Newsletter are also available from the Agency's File Access System. To access these documents, first select PPC File Access System from the Bureau File Access Systems menu. From the main PPC File Access System menu, select: **Program Evaluation**
Select the publication of interest from the next menu:
Evaluation Agenda
Evaluation Highlights
Evaluation Compendium Summaries
New Evaluation Reports
Evaluation Newsletter
Evaluation Publication List

In addition, the PPC File Access System contains the text of the 1994 Annual Report on Program Performance, both the full and core versions. To access it from the Main PPC File Access System menu, select: **Program Monitoring**

You can also access the 1994 Annual Report by first selecting the Executive Information System from the Bureau's File Access System main menu. Then select: **Agencywide Information**